(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed its largest ever defence deal with the US for a whopping. $ 2.2 billion to fill a crucial gap in its maritime reconnaissance capability;

(b) if so, whether it has been decided not to accept any restrictions on the use of equipment purchases from foreign nations;

(c) the main features of the deal; and

(d) to what extent it has been helpful to Naval Force?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) A proposal for acquisition of maritime reconnaissance aircraft is currently under consideration. Aircraft proposed to be acquired would be helpful to the Navy in meeting their requirement for long range maritime surveillance.

Cost escalation of aircraft-carrier

505. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Russian Government has proposed a price escalation of a staggering $ 1.2 billion for re-equipping aircraft carrier;

(b) if so, whether technical evaluation and negotiations in this regard are underway;

(c) whether the revision in time and cost for repairing the aircraft carriers due to growth of work the price escalation proposal by Russian side in $ 1,202 million;

(d) whether any final decision in this regard has been taken and whether any final deal has been finalized; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (e) The Russian side has submitted a revised Master Schedule indicating a delay and an increase in price for repair and re-equipping of ex-Admiral Gorshkov aircraft carrier. The price escalation proposed by the Russian side towards repair and re-equipping, spares and training, etc., is USD 1202 million. Only technical evaluation is underway and no cost negotiations have been initiated in this regard.

Status of WTO negotiations on agriculture

506. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:
Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations; and

(b) the steps being taken and proposed to be taken by Government to safeguard interests of low income and poor resource farmers of the country from the adverse decisions of WTO?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) A mini-Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), attended by about 30 Trade Ministers, was held in Geneva in July 2008 to finalise modalities for Agriculture and Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA). Simultaneously, a meeting on Services ("Signalling" conference) was also held. The mini-Ministerial meeting, however, ended without an agreement on any issue. The general opinion amongst WTO Members was that the negotiations should resume at the earliest opportunity despite this setback. The multilateral process of discussions has since resumed in the WTO on both agriculture and NAMA issues.

(b) The needs and interests of the developing countries, including the least developed among them, are at the heart of the present round of negotiations, which is a Development Round. The principal aim of India's negotiating strategy in this Round has been to protect the interests of farmers, particularly with regard to their food and livelihood security. Substantial and effective reductions in domestic support and import tariffs by developed countries, while enabling developing countries to protect and promote the interests of their low income and resource poor farmers, is a key priority for India and other developing countries in the agriculture negotiations. The flexibilities available to developing countries including, *inter alia*, lower tariff cuts than developed countries, self-designation of Special Products (SPs) which will have more flexible tariff reduction commitments than other products and the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) to safeguard the interests of farmers in the event of surges in import volumes or a fall in prices would be utilized by India for protecting low income and resource poor farmers of the country.

Fresh Violence Eruption in Assam

507. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that fresh violence has erupted in Assam and hundreds of people have been killed in this ethnic violence;

(b) whether Government is also aware that thousands of people living in Assam have become refugees in their home;

(c) if so, the details of places of violence, people killed and number of them still in camps; and

(d) what has been done by Government to prevent further escalation of situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (c) As per reports received from Government of Assam, 57 persons including 25 in Police action lost their lives and 117 persons were injured in the violence which took place during 3-5 October, 2008 in Udalguri and Darrang districts of Assam. Around 60,000 persons in Udalguri district and 68,000 people in Darrang district are presently staying in the relief camps set up by the State Government.

(d) The Army was deployed in aid of civil authority since the early morning of 4th October, 2008. The State Government had also redeployed units of the Assam Police and the Central Para-